

**IN THE SPECIFICATION**

Please replace paragraph 67 with the following:

As discussed above, the present technique may utilize a variety of communications, monitoring, and operational maintenance modules to improve the reliability and efficiency of the imaging system 10. Fig. ~~[[8]]~~ 9 is a flowchart illustrating an exemplary command-response system 400 of the present technique. The system 400 may comprise the control/command management modules 224 and 236, as illustrated by Fig. 7, or any other suitable software and circuitry. In this exemplary embodiment, the command-response system 400 proceeds by setting a response time for commands (block 402). For example, a response time of X1 ms may be required for commands sent to one slave node, while a response time of X2 ms may be required for commands sent to another slave node. In operation, the system 400 transmits a command to one or more slave nodes for execution at the respective slave node (block 404). The system 400 then queries whether the intended slave node received the command within the set response time (block 406).

Please replace paragraph 69 with the following:

Fig. ~~[[8]]~~ 10 is a flowchart illustrating an exemplary message-response system 500 of the present technique. The system 500 may comprise the routine operational guarding modules 216 and 228, as illustrated by Fig. 7, or any other suitable software and circuitry. In this exemplary embodiment, the message-response system 500 proceeds by setting a response time for routine operational check messages (block 502). For example, a response time of Y1 ms may be required for operational check messages sent to one slave node, while a response time of Y2 ms may be required for operational check messages sent to another slave node. In operation, the system 500 transmits an operational check message, or any other desired message, between master and slave

nodes (block 504). The system 500 then queries whether the intended recipient (e.g., slave node) received the message within the set response time (block 506). The system 500 may transmit these messages in either direction between the master and slave nodes, thereby allowing status checks of both master and slave nodes.